Protest against privatisation of airports

*452. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that thousands of employees of Airport Authority had undergone on fast to protest the decision to privatise major airports; and

(b) if so; the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) A country-wide relay fast to protest was called by Airports Authority of India (AAI) Employees Joint Forum from 7th March 2005 to 23rd March, 2005 at ail International and Major Airports. Adequate' Steps were taken to ensure that there was no disruption in the Airport Operations. During the protest period, operation at airports was normal and' no adverse report on flight operations and other airport services were received from any field stations.

New bilateral air **agreements**

*453. DR. KARAN SINGH:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to sign a plethora of new bilateral agreements in regions spanning Middle East, Europe and US, which would throw open more capacities on these routes;

(b) whether his Ministry has identified the Middle East packages in Europe like UK and Germany and the use for entering into new bilaterals;

(c) if so, whether any agreement has been reached;

(d) to what extent Government have been able to open its arm to sky policy;

(e) what are total agreements reached with countries so far; and

(f) to what extent such agreements have been helpful as far as India is concerned?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL):(a) to (c) Traffic rights for operation of international air services are specified in our bilateral Air Services Agreements concluded

with various countries and are reviewed from time to time as part of an ongoing process depending on traffic demand, balance of benefit to our carriers, overall interest of national economy and diplomatic/political considerations. Although no specific packages have been identified, as part of the ongoing process, bilateral air services consultations on traffic rights have recently been held with USA, China, UK, France, Mauritius, UAE, Australia etc. and additional capacity has been agreed to for operation of air services between India and those countries. Revised/new Air Services Agreements have also been signed/initialed with USA, Australia, Tunisia, Brazil and Qatar over the last couple of years. Bilateral consultations with Germany are yet to be held.

(d) to (f) India has so far entered into bilateral Air Services Agreements with 100 countries. In order to promote international connectivity out of India, traffic rights are being exchanged liberally with most countries having significant point-to-point traffic with India on continuous basis. Though we do not have an open sky regime, liberal exchange of traffic rights has helped in adding capacity on international routes on one hand and has opened up commercial opportunities for our airlines on the other. Due to increased connectivity and competition, tariff reduction on international sector is also expected. Liberalization in international services will benefit the national economy as a whole and tourism, trade/commerce in particular.

Share of plan budget of ministries and departments for development of North Eastern Region

*454. SHRI T.R. ZELIANG: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether as envisaged by Government all Ministries and Departments have allocated 10 per cent of their Plan Budget during 2004-05 for development of North-Eastern Region;

(b) if so, the details thereof indicating the amount, department-wise; and

(c) if not, which are the defaulting departments and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) Ministry/Department-wise details of the lumpsum provision made by them in RE 2004-05 for projects/ schemes for benefit of North Eastern Areas and Sikkim are as given below:—